

The things they
carried critical
argumentative essay



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By: Tim O'Brien English 10 September 7, 2004 Tim O'Brien's, *The Things They Carried*, was a good piece of literature. The book contains various stories from Tim O'Brien and people he knew during the Vietnam War. *The Things They Carried* had very memorable characters that were all unique, realistic, and vividly portrayed. The plot of *The Things They Carried* had many recurring images, a well developed structure, and an extremely worthwhile subject. The theme of the book is universal, developed as the book went on, and also gave the reader a new perspective.

All of the characters in *The Things They Carried* were unique, memorable, and very well described. They all had their own reasons for being in the war, whether they wanted to or not. There was Kiowa who was Native American, who was very religious, and he was only in the war because he was drafted. There was also Tim O'Brien's own story, which was that he had gotten drafted, and almost ran away to Canada before the war. The characters were also realistic to the story, mostly because the book is based on true stories from Vietnam. "The average age in our platoon, I'd guess, was 19 to 20..." They were mostly young men, all with their own items that they thought brought them luck, or had a kind of emotional value. Carrying items for superstitious reasons was very popular during the war, which makes the characters even more realistic and well portrayed.

"When a mission took them to the mountains, they carried mosquito netting, machetes, canvas tarps and extra bug juice." In *The Things They Carried*, the phrase "They carried..." was repeated many times throughout the book. It was the book's most popular motif, and it related to the book, because each person carried different things to different places at different times. The

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books structure was also well developed, because when the author gets the reader into the story that he's telling at that time, he will end it, and then finish it later on in the book during another story. Using this kind of structure, it makes the reader want to keep reading, and find out what's going to happen next. The subject of *The Things They Carried* is very important. It is about the Vietnam War, which affected the lives of millions of people and changed the world. It's a good subject for a book because it helps the reader learn about an important war that affected the world. All of those qualities give *The Things They Carried* a good plot, which help make it such a good piece of literature.

The theme of *The Things They Carried* is very well developed. Its strongest quality is that it is universal. The book is showing how the war not only destroyed the lives of Americans and hurt our country, but the effects it had throughout the world. The negative effects of war are felt by everyone, whether they "won" or "lost". War is war and there's no glorious part to it, and that is what the book is trying to show. "Everyone lost something in the war, no matter which country they were from, or how many medals they won. We all lost something." As the book went on the story steadily developed. The author would tie up loose ends, or give the reader a final detail that helped you understand everything that went on. It also gives the reader a new perspective, which is a strong quality of a good piece of literature. At the end of the book, the reader will get a new perspective about war, and life in general. After reading the book the reader's perspective changes to seeing that war is not glorious, it only destroys lives, and most of the time it is unnecessary.

The Things They Carried is a great piece of literature. It has memorable and unique characters, a very strong plot, and a universal and well developed theme. All of these qualities contribute to making The Things They Carried the great piece of literature it is.